

**Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**John F. Kennedy Junior High School
4495 South 4800 West
West Valley City, Utah 84120**

February 9-10, 2005



Utah State Office of Education
250 East 500 South
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**THE REPORT OF THE
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**John F. Kennedy Junior High School
4495 South 4800 West
West Valley City, Utah 84120**

February 9-10, 2005

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Salt Lake City, Utah

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FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, February 9-10, 2005, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of John F. Kennedy Junior High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the visiting team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Howard Sagers is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at John F. Kennedy Junior High School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at John F. Kennedy Junior High School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

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JOHN F. KENNEDY JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Howard Sagers Principal
Kandice Barber Assistant Principal
Noelle Converse..... Intern Assistant Principal

Counseling

Mike Vaughan..... Counselor
Jennie Williams..... Counselor
Kent Mayne..... Counselor

Support Staff

Cindy Hobbs Principal's Secretary
Sandi Jones..... Finance Secretary
Det. Steve O'Camb School Resource Officer
Jorge Rodriguez Head Custodian
Naomi Telford..... Guidance Secretary
Jennifer Vargo..... Attendance Secretary

Faculty

Frank Allison	Kendra Divine	Kent Mayne
Kelley Allred	Sheree Duncan	Leesa McBeth
LaRaine Andreason	Porter Dutson	Mark McOmber
Jan Apgood	Kathi Fackrell	Rob Nielsen
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Dave Thor
Diane Valencia
Michael Vaughan
Amanda Waterhouse

Mark Watts
Carol Weyrauch
Jennie Williams

JOHN F. KENNEDY JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

The Kennedy Community promotes positive learning in a safe, respectful, and diverse environment to achieve our maximum potential.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

We Believe:

1. Student learning is a chief priority of the school.
2. Students need to not only demonstrate their understanding of essential knowledge and skills, but also need to be actively involved in solving problems and producing quality work.
3. Curriculum and instructional practices should incorporate a variety of learning activities to accommodate differences in all students' learning styles.
4. Teachers, administrators, parents, and students, and community share the responsibility for advancing the school's mission.
5. A safe and physically comfortable environment promotes student learning.
6. Exceptional students (e.g., special education, limited English proficiency, gifted and talented, etc.) require special services and resources.
7. Each student is a valued individual with unique physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs.
8. A student's self-esteem is enhanced by positive relationships and mutual respect among and between students and staff.
9. Students learn to make appropriate decisions when given a supportive and challenging learning environment.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Craig Jessop, Wahlquist Junior High School, Weber School District,
Visiting Team Chairperson

Patrice Behunin, Rocky Mountain Junior High School, Weber School District

Michael Goodman, Mount Jordan Middle School, Jordan School District

Kathleen Nye, Rocky Mountain Junior High School, Weber School District

Jessica Shaw, Madeleine Choir School, Catholic Diocese of Salt Lake City

VISITING TEAM REPORT
JOHN F. KENNEDY JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Kennedy Junior High School first opened in 1969. It currently has 1,245 students and a teaching staff of 58. Enrollment is trending downward.

Kennedy has a diverse population: 64 percent of students are Caucasian, 25 percent are Hispanic, 5 percent are Pacific Islander, 3 percent are Asian, 2 percent are Black, and 1 percent are American Indian.

Kennedy has 411 ESL students; 214 of those students are mainstreamed and 197 are served in separate classes. Many parents work multiple jobs, but still 44 percent of students are on fee waivers and 47 percent of students are on free or reduced-price lunch. It is difficult to elicit parental involvement for programs such as the School Community Council and PTSA, although parents routinely attend parent/teacher conferences.

Students at Kennedy Junior High have many opportunities to become involved in extra-curricular activities. The MESA organization at Kennedy is one of the largest in the state, with over 100 members. Many students participate in district-sponsored sports, as well as intramurals at the school. Fine arts programs, academic activities, yearbook, Community of Caring, and the Gifted and Talented program all support student learning and involvement.

The certificated staff is quite diverse in its experience and training. Twenty-two have 10 or fewer years' experience, 21 have 11 to 20 years' experience, and 19 have 21 or more years of experience. Of those in the final group, 11 have more than 30 years' experience. Thirty-two of the certificated staff members have master's degrees, and two have completed a doctoral program.

a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?

SAT results show that over the last three years the overall scores have been relatively stable: reading scores have increased slightly, math and science have remained stable, and language arts and social studies have decreased. Kennedy's SAT scores are generally lower than the state and district scores.

Total Core Test results show the greatest deficiencies among the Pacific Islanders. Asian students score the highest. Hispanic and free-lunch students also show deficiencies in those who are at the mastery level. Disaggregated groups reaching mastery or near mastery vary depending on the core area being tested.

Surveys of students, parents, and teachers show that strong majorities of parents and teachers (77 percent and 78 percent respectively) agree or strongly agree that they are satisfied with the school. Students, on the other hand, only recorded 39 percent who were similarly satisfied. The largest area of disagreement among all three groups is with the statement that there are no problems with bullies at school. Among teachers, there was also dissatisfaction expressed about class size, student respect, and student motivation. Parents were concerned about class size and somewhat concerned about mathematics instruction. Students indicated that substance abuse is a problem and felt that teachers could be more willing to help.

Departmental analyses indicated concerns in three areas that came up more often than any others. These are (1) technology, (2) class size, and (3) varied concerns with the block scheduling.

- b) *What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

Kennedy Junior did a very thorough profile. However, very little information was offered about the Community of Caring, which was mentioned as an award-winning program at the school. The extent to which extracurricular and nurturing programs affect students would round out an otherwise wonderful profile.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- Continue to monitor groups that score low on SAT and end-of-level tests.
- Investigate specific areas of weakness for individual groups within the curriculum areas.
- Track progress of teaming now that more collaboration time has been provided.
- Determine the extent to which school uniforms have influenced student attitude and progress.

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

- a) *To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

Certificated personnel were intimately involved in every aspect of the process. The community at large was less involved. However, PTSA members and the Community Council were kept apprised of the progress and were given the

opportunity to approve mission, beliefs, DRSLs, etc. as they were developed by the staff.

- b) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

The self-study was thorough and thoughtful. The study included many aspects of student progress and community challenges. Departments and focus groups appear to have been honest in their appraisals, seeking both strengths and suggested areas for growth.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Kennedy Junior High School's desired results for student learning (DRSLs) are as follows:

1. LIFE LONG LEARNER
2. COLLABORATIVE WORKER
3. COMPLEX THINKER

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

- a) *To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

The school has worked collaboratively as a faculty to design DRSLs and a mission statement reflective of their needs as a school community. After reviewing and analyzing the previous mission statement, the accreditation team presented an extended revised statement to the faculty and PTSA, which was approved. The team's work was based upon parent, student, and staff surveys, teacher input, and assessments.

- b) *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?*

The school's beliefs are based upon the needs of the school and community. The entire faculty worked together to update and expand the school's belief statements, which reflect the goals, plans, and culture of the school.

- c) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?*

The school views the alignment of the mission, DRSLs, and beliefs as necessary and natural—each aspect needing the other two in order to function successfully. The Visiting Team finds that the three aspects align with each other very well at Kennedy Junior High.

Curriculum Development:

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

The staff bases instruction on the Utah Core Curriculum but is also able, through teaming between departments as well as block scheduling, to extend and integrate student learning across all core subject areas. The DRSLs defined by the school are taken directly from the Utah Life Skills.

- b) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?*

The teachers have weekly meetings within departments to discuss what each teacher is doing in his/her classroom and how it can be related to other classrooms. In addition, they discuss current student needs and concerns in order to best meet the learning needs of their student population. Instruction is based upon the school's DRSLs.

Quality Instructional Design:

- a) *To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?*

The Visiting Team found that the block schedule has allowed team teaching for 7th and 8th grade in English, math, social studies, and science. In the 9th grade the English and science teachers have time to meet and collaborate. The teachers are involved in staff development on instructional strategies that will improve student learning with the block schedule. The teachers attend workshops and in-service to help them with their instructional strategies.

- b) *To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?*

The Visiting Team found that a variety of types of instruction were taking place. Instructional strategies observed throughout the visit included reading, lectures, critical thinking, brainstorming, portfolios, labs, lecture, textbook use, worksheets, cooperative learning, technology, video, hands-on application, think-pair-share, peer tutoring, assimilation games, and note taking.

Teachers have ESL students who speak English well pair up with students that struggle with their English. The Visiting Team observed that student-to-student collaboration was taking place in many classrooms.

The Gifted and Talented program meets the accelerated students' needs. The 7th, 8th and 9th grades are all integrated in this program, and the curriculum rotates on a three-year block. The team members have obtained their Gifted and Talented endorsements.

- c) *To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?*

The Visiting Team found that Kennedy Junior High consistently provides students with assistance to improve their learning. Assistance provided includes the tutor lab after school, the Action 3000 class, the techniques class, resource aides, business partnership tutors in the classroom and tutor labs, Words of Wisdom in the daily announcements, Math Family Night, science fair, technology fair, annual art show, Shakespeare festival, state math contest, academic games, geography bee, sports intramurals, and inter-scholastic sports.

Teachers in the 7th and 8th grade team weekly and discuss the individual needs of their students and develop plans to assist struggling students. Teachers also invite parents to team meetings in order to include them in cooperative plans to help students be more successful in school.

Quality Assessment Systems:

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

In talking with the staff members, the Visiting Team found that they have looked at the Iowa test, end-of-level tests, school-wide Math Milestone tests, Benchmark tests from the district, and reading tests to place students in the correct classes, as well as using this data to adjust their curriculum to meet their testing goals.

- b) *To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?*

Visiting Team observed that teachers assessed student learning by many different methods. Visiting Team saw research projects, group assignments, product projects, oral presentations, and student-teacher interviews.

- c) *To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?*

Visiting Team observed that all staff members helped with the decision making about how student achievement would be measured. They all have been trained in ESL sheltered strategies. Many students are enrolled in ESL classes and special education classes, where they are assessed at their achievement level.

Leadership for School Improvement:

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?*

The administration at Kennedy Junior High is well respected by the teachers who recognize the efforts that are made foster teaching and learning. The administrative team is often in the hallways and classrooms. The administration, in collaboration with the teachers, has developed the block schedule, which allows for more intra-team collaboration. They have also developed a remediation program for students who fail geography and English, the two classes that are most difficult to make up in high school.

- b) *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?*

The leadership team actively looks at data, specifically standardized test scores, to determine classroom needs. Safe-school and discipline needs are research-based. Major decisions, such as the decision to move to block scheduling, are made in collaboration with teachers. However, department heads would like to have improved communication and input.

- c) *To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?*

The Visiting Team observed that the staff members are continually looking at the data in order to adjust, when necessary, to meet the goals of their school improvement plan. Visiting Team observed and was told by students that the administration is out in classrooms on a regular basis. Teacher evaluations are done on a continual basis.

- d) *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?*

The school is staffed with many professionals such as a full-time resource officer, administrative intern, school psychologist, and student tracker, as well as the regular staff members. There are three student counselors on staff. The additional personnel help facilitate the learning process and ensure a safe environment.

- e) *To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?*

The administration stated that all monies spent at Kennedy are spent to help students. Kennedy has an outstanding business partner in USANA. This organization's support has allowed for many of the school's goals to be accomplished according to the school improvement plan. The administration has given teachers time through teaming and their block schedule to let them collaborate. The school has a half-day schedule on Fridays, with the extra time to be used for professional development.

- f) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?*

The Visiting Team observed the administration's enthusiasm for the whole process of collaborating with their staff members to reach school improvement goals. Parents stated that they feel supported by the teachers and the administration.

Community Building:

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

John F. Kennedy Junior High School has a highly diversified student population, with 36 percent being ethnic minority, 32 percent ESL, and 44 percent on fee waiver. The Visiting Team observed a positive attitude of inclusion among teachers and students, which is enhanced by the school's standardized dress policy. The school displays a positive environment for learning. There is a high level of collaborative teaching within the teams. The Visiting Team observed paired learning and cooperative learning groups in a majority of the classrooms.

- b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

Kennedy Junior High has a supportive PTSA and Community Council, which meet regularly and are committed to school improvement and parent involvement on school committees and activities. The school regularly recognizes student achievement, citizenship, and improvement. The school has one of the largest MESA Clubs in the state and a large Gifted and Talented program.

The administration, faculty and PTSA are concerned about low participation among ethnic minority parents at school community activities. The school provides translators for non-English-speaking parents who visit the school and attend parent/teacher conferences. The school newsletter is produced in English and Spanish.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

- a) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

The faculty and administration demonstrate a commitment to professional development. Fifty-four percent have earned advanced degrees, and 40 percent of the faculty members have 20 or more years of experience. Sixteen teachers speak one or more non-English languages, and eight teachers have ESL endorsements. In-service training is determined by teacher surveys and requests.

- b) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

The teachers are positive about their common planning period and Friday afternoon planning time, even though they acknowledge some problems dealing with the extended teaching time on the block schedule. Teachers feel that they are free to voice opinions and assist in planning and implementing programs. The grade level teams are committed to interdisciplinary planning and collaboration for student learning and look forward to including ninth grade level teams.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI

Most Utah public junior high /middle schools are not accredited through NAAS, only by the USOE – it is their choice to join NAAS or not.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

- a) *To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?*

The action plan addresses five major areas of concern: (1) literacy, (2) numeracy, (3) technology, (4) school climate, and (5) communication within school and community. These are areas that were addressed in the self-study and identified as concerns, weaknesses, or areas of needed growth. They appear to be right on target.

- b) *To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?*

The administration expressed confidence that the staff is committed to the process and will continue to act upon areas of concern. This can be accomplished through further teaming, department collaboration, and areas of focus.

- c) *How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the school-wide action plan appear to be?*

The school is committed to teaming and has already devoted substantial effort to making adjustments in scheduling, teaching techniques, appropriation of time, and interdepartmental collaboration. The teams and the teaming process will continue to be the focal point for monitoring accomplishments and effecting change for the benefit of students. The addition of ninth grade teams in the near future will only strengthen the school-wide initiatives.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The teaming concept allows for a natural collaboration between team members and disciplines. The block schedule allows for extra collaborative time.
- There is a positive attitude of inclusion within the community. There is a feeling of multicultural acceptance among the students that allows the educational process to move forward without major interruptions.
- The dress code, with emphasis on school uniforms, plays a major role in the atmosphere of cooperation within the school community.
- Teachers make a concerted effort to provide real-world application for concepts and skills taught in the classroom.
- Students have many opportunities in a variety of classroom settings to practice cooperative work skills.
- John F. Kennedy Junior High has a tradition of recognizing success and creating a legacy of achievement. The school is filled with pictures and awards given to students since the school first opened. Many of those early recipients are now parents in the community who continue to support the school.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that Kennedy Junior High develop rubrics to aid in measuring the success of the action plans and the progress of the DRSLs.
- The Visiting Team recommends training for the staff on a variety of methods to most effectively use the 80+ minutes per class period in the block schedule. The Visiting Team also recommends training on transition methods as teachers move from one activity to another.
- The Visiting Team recommends more collaboration and communication between the administration and department heads.